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ABSTRACT

A national survey conducted in November-December 1983, similar to one in 1973, investigated attitudes toward, competence in, and use of Irish among adults in Ireland. Of the 1,131 individuals interviewed, all aged 18 or over, about 420 were under age 30. The report summarizes preliminary results. The first section reports general attitudes toward Irish as an ethnic symbol, Irish usage and instruction in the schools, use of Irish in interpersonal interactions, attitudes toward the Gaeltacht (areas in Ireland where Irish is the primary language), and beliefs about the viability of the language and its relevance in modern life. In the second section, respondents' evaluations of their own ability to speak Irish, and that of other family members, are summarized. The third section presents data on respondents' use of Irish in conversation, in writing, at home, at work, and in watching television. Section four reports on attitudes toward Irish language policies, including anticipated feelings if Gaeltacht disappears, priorities for Irish language policy, the school program preferred for most children, support for Irish entrance requirements for postsecondary education, and views of policies concerning Irish in the media, public administration, and support for voluntary language groups. The final section presents statements from the 1973 survey, followed by a summary of findings of the 1983 survey. (MSE)

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THE IRISH LANGUAGE IN THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND 1983:

PRELIMINARY REPORT OF A NATIONAL SURVEY

Pádraig ÓRiagáin **Micheál Ó Gilasáin**

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PRELIMINARY REPORT OF A NATIONAL SURVEY

PÁDRAIG Ó RIAGÁIN MÍCHEÁL Ó GLIASÁIN

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FOREWORD

In 1973, just over 10 years ago, a major survey was conducted among the adult population of Ireland regarding their attitudes to, competence in and use of Irish. The survey was undertaken by a research team assembled for this purpose by the Committee on Irish Language Attitudes Research which had been appointed by the Government in 1970. The Committee's report* has become a standard reference work since it was published in 1975.

It was not the first occasion that a representative sample of the national population had been questioned about aspects of their behaviour towards Irish. In fact, Irish marketing agencies had included some questions on the Irish language in various surveys since the mid-sixties and, of course, a question on the Irish language had been included in the Censuses of Population between 1926 and 1971. But the 1973 survey was the first occasion on which the methodology and approach of sociolinguistics/sociology of language had been systematically used to design and execute a national language survey in Ireland. The results were far more comprehensive than earlier studies and covered, in detail, questions of competence in Irish, use of Irish in the home and in social life and attitudes towards Irish and Irish language policies.

However, all surveys go out of date. Last year I.T.É. felt that it was time to undertake a fresh survey using, as far as possible, the same questionnaire as had been prepared for the 1973 survey. As the cost of such surveys is increasing by the year it was necessary to limit the number of interviews to about 1,000 (compared to about 2,500 in the 1973 survey). Even with this adjustment, however, I.T.É. would not have been able to proceed with what was still a costly project without the substantial assistance provided by Bord na Gaeilge. For this assistance I.T.É. is deeply appreciative.

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* This report is commonly referred to as the CLAR report. This acronym will also be used throughout this report.

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The survey was conducted in November and early December 1983. Because up-to-date data on the Irish language from other sources is extremely limited and in the context of Bord na Gaeilge's recently published four-year Action Plan, we have decided to issue a short preliminary report in advance of any detailed analytical work. It is preliminary in the usual sense that, while all due care has been taken, figures included in this report are subject to later correction and adjustment. Secondly, the only figures that we are in a position to publish at this stage are general, aggregated totals. Detailed breakdowns of these figures will, of course, be included in the final report. Lastly, it will be clear that no extended discussion of the implications of the findings can be conducted at this stage. While some of the tables published here, particularly those comparing the 1973 and 1983 surveys, suggest some general conclusions, their full ramifications can only be assessed when the detailed effects of age, education, occupation, region and other factors have been teased out.

While the research project and questionnaire were designed within I.T.E., the technical task of drawing the sample and the practical work of interviewing respondents was carried out for us by the Survey Unit of the Economic and Social Research Institute under the direction of Dr. Brendan Whelan. We warmly acknowledge the patient and capable assistance Dr. Whelan and his staff gave to us.

Finally, we must express our appreciation to the thousand or so persons throughout the state who consented to answer our questions.

INTRODUCTION

The 1973 CLAR survey used a lengthy questionnaire consisting largely of closed-ended questions, i.e. where the respondents were presented with a standard range of answers from which to choose. As our objective was to repeat this survey we tested a virtually unchanged questionnaire in a pilot survey in 1982. However, this preparatory work indicated that there was fairly widespread resistance to the length of the questionnaire and it was also clear that there was a degree of overlapping and repetition between questions. We also felt obliged to take account of CLAR's own observations that some policy questions might have been more extensively examined. Thus, before we undertook the main survey in 1983, the questionnaire was modified to take account of these and other matters. In comparison with the questionnaire used in 1973, the main features of the 1983 version are as follows:

(1) All the main attitudinal, ability and use questions were retained in exactly the same form as in 1973.

(2) A number of attitudinal items shown by the CLAR analysis to be irrelevant or of marginal significance were omitted.

(3) Overlapping questions were also excluded.

(4) In the case of questions on the use of Irish it was felt that many CLAR questions were too vague or general. Additional questions were included in an effort to obtain more exact information.

(5) As growing proportions of the population have been remaining in school for longer periods, new questions were included to establish the extent and nature of their involvement with Irish in post-primary schools and examinations.

(6) New questions were framed to measure the population's response to broad language policy options at primary, post-primary and university levels of education.

(7) With regard to the use of Irish at work, questions were included to establish if Irish was an essential qualification for the respondent's job and whether the respondent (or respondent's father or spouse) worked in the public or private sector.

(8) More refined questions were composed to measure the respondents' pattern of watching or listening to Irish programmes on radio or television.

The Sample

CLAR interviewed some 2,500 people plus an additional 450 in the Gaeltacht. While financial considerations prohibited a survey of similar size we were still concerned to interview a sufficient number of respondents to keep sampling error (which increases with declining sample size) within reasonable proportions. After considering the statistical and practical factors, it was decided to aim at a sample size of 800 and in fact 791 persons were interviewed. All respondents were at least 18 years old.

In addition to the 791 person national sample, we were also anxious to interview sufficient numbers of young adults (i.e. under 30 years) to support a separate analysis. Therefore, an additional 240 young people were interviewed, with the same questionnaire. Together with the young people included in the main sample, this will give us about 420 interviews with persons under 30 for special study. Figures for this sub-sample are not, however, included in this report, except as part of the main sample.

The sample was drawn from all parts of the state in proportion to the population resident in each county or county borough. As the Gaeltacht was not excluded from the sampling frame, about 35 respondents in two marginal Breac-Ghaeltacht areas were included in the main sample. However, as CLAR analysed the Gaeltacht separately from the rest of their main sample, Gaeltacht respondents are accordingly omitted from tables in this report in order to facilitate comparisons with the 1973 survey.

Outline of Report

The summary material in this report is presented under the same general headings that were used in the CLAR Report (i.e. Attitudes Ability and Use) but not in quite the same order. In Section A we present the results pertaining to general attitudes, but attitudes to aspects of Irish language policy are reported in Section D. Sections on ability and use come between.

A preliminary report of this nature is not the place to discuss at any length the conceptual or methodological aspects of the survey. That will be done later. In the meantime we refer the interested reader to the relevant sections of the CLAR report.

Finally, we would note that both the CLAR survey and this present one are sample surveys, i.e. they are designed to allow estimates to be made of the language attitudes, competence and behaviour of the national population. Figures, therefore, have to be examined within ranges of probability at different levels of confidence. This is particularly important when comparing differences between the two survey samples. We will later be applying appropriate statistical tests to the data to establish if differences are significant or otherwise. At present, we are conservatively assuming that only differences in excess of 6% are likely to prove significant. However, more exact tests will probably reveal differences smaller than this to be significant also, particularly where the differences consistently occur across a range of items.

NOTE: In the sections that follow we quote freely from the CLAR report. Page numbers appended to these quotations refer to the report as published in 1975. It may be obtained from Oifig Dhfolta Foilseachán Rialtais, Dublin.

SECTION A - GENERAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS IRISH

In the 1973 survey, some 70 to 80 questions were put to respondents to elicit their attitudes towards Irish. In 1983 fewer questions were included, but all of the items shown by the CLAR report to be significant were retained. We have, therefore, the same problem as our predecessors, that is, how to assemble this large array of data into sets that will allow a concise and meaningful presentation of the Irish public's attitude to this complex issue to be made. We will, at a later stage, be subjecting this material to more detailed examination and testing, but in the meantime we feel it will be most helpful for comparative purposes if we retain the presentation format of the earlier report. This format arose from the CLAR's use of Factor Analysis, which sorted attitudinal items into six identifiable and separate clusters or dimensions, each dimension being composed of a range of attitudinal items which seemed statistically and logically coherent. In order to facilitate a preliminary comparison of the 1973 and 1983 surveys, we will accept for the time being the grouping of attitudinal items as presented by CLAR. It is possible, of course, that later analysis will reveal a shift in these groupings.

Attitude to Irish as an Ethnic Symbol (CLAR Dimension 1)

Regarding the attitudinal items grouped on this dimension (see Table 1) the Committee wrote:

> "The top-scoring items on this scale clearly express beliefs and feelings about Irish as a focus of ethnic or national identity (Items 1, 2, 5, 8, 9 and 16). That is they link the Irish language with ethnic identity, as a validation of its cultural distinctiveness or, (as in item 7), as a means of publicly identifying this. Related to this main ethnic dimension, however, there is another element underlying responses, which concerns public support for Irish to guarantee its transmission and personal commitment to this (Items 3, 4, 6, 7, 11, 12 and 15). The remaining four items form a set of beliefs about the possibility of successfully reviving Irish (10, 13, 14 and 17). The percentaged responses .... show clearly that the importance of Irish as a symbol of national and cultural identity, and the resulting necessity

TABLE 1 : ATTITUDES TO IRISH AS AN ETHNIC SYMBOL (CLAR Dimension I)

Questions	1973			1983		
	Agree	No opinion	Disagree	Agree	No opinion	Disagree
1. Ireland would not really be Ireland without its Irish-speaking people	64	3	34	66	2	32
2. Without Irish, Ireland would certainly lose its identity as a separate culture	56	6	38	66	3	31
3. All children should be required to learn Irish as a subject in school	68	1	31	*	*	*
4. The Government should spend more money on improving methods of teaching Irish	58	7	35	63	6	31
5. No real Irish person can be against the revival of Irish	72	3	25	73	2	25
6. It is better for people to speak Irish badly than not at all	69	5	26	78	5	17
7. Public leaders should set a good example by using Irish more in the Dail and in public life	55	5	40	67	4	29
8. To really understand traditional Irish culture one must know Irish	58	6	36	57	2	41
9. Using the Irish language would make Ireland more independent of England	41	5	54	40	4	56
10. Irish can be revived as a common means of communication	39	7	54	41	9	50
11. Irish speakers have the right to expect Civil Servants to be able to speak Irish with them	71	7	22	80	3	17
12. Far less money should be spent reviving Irish no matter what effect this has on the language	48	6	46	38	10	52
13. Irish is a dead language	42	4	54	40	6	54
14. No matter what the Government does attempts to revive Irish are bound to fail	45	9	46	48	10	42
15. What the Government does about the Irish language is not important to me	46	2	52	38	2	60
16. Irish traditions have a valuable contribution to make to modern life	82	6	12	*	*	*
17. If Irish were taught better in the schools, more people would speak it	68	4	28	69	6	25
	N = 2443			N = 754		

* In this and all other tables (except Table 17) an asterisk indicates that the question was omitted from the survey.

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for its guaranteed maintenance and transmission, is recognised by a substantial majority of the population." (p.25)

In the table we show the percentaged responses for both surveys side by side. It can be readily seen that there is a consistent overall shift towards a more favourable attitude. With one exception, the already high level of support on items relating to Irish as an ethnic symbol has been maintained (items 1, 5, 8 and 9) while on item 2 ('Without Irish, Ireland would certainly lose its identity as a separate culture') the level of support for the statement increased from 56% to 66%. The questions relating to public support for Irish show more substantial changes, again in a supportive direction (4, 6, 7, 11, 12, 15). As will be seen, this shift also reveals itself in questions directed at apecific aspects of policy (See Section D below). On the present dimension there is very little change in responses to questions about the possibility of reviving Irish. The question relating to the teaching of Irish to all children (Item 3) was omitted in 1983, but another question suggests that public support for the teaching of Irish is very high and almost certainly higher than in 1973. The responses to the question about the type of bilingual programme most suitable for most children indicate that about 95% of the population would like to see Irish taught to most children (See Table 15).

One other feature of the comparison must be noted, although the evidence does not appear in Table 1, due to the amalgamation of response categories. To obtain the most detailed possible estimate of the public's attitude, respondents were invited to indicate which of five possible replies - Strongly Agree, Mildly Agree, Mildly Disagree, Strongly Disagree and No Opinion - most closely approximated to their own view. For the purposes of Table 1, these five categories were reduced to three. But in their original form, they indicate a drift away from strongly held positions, both favourable and unfavourable, to Irish. That is to say that people are more inclined to declare themselves as '<u>mildly</u>' agreeing/disagreeing with a statement than in 1973. For example, in 1983 66% of the population were in overall agreement with the statement 'Ireland would not really

be Ireland without its Irish-speaking people'. However, while this is almost identical with the response in 1973 (64%), the proportion strongly agreeing fell from 35% to 27%. It was an increase in the proportion 'mildly agreeing' (from 29% to 39%) that maintained the overall figure. On this and other questions there is a similar drift from 'strongly' disagreeing towards 'mildly' disagreeing. It should be stressed that this drift appears in the responses to many, but not all of the questions on this and the other five dimensions: it is consisently of the same pattern and it affects both positive and negative positions.

Attitude to Irish in the Schools (CLAR Dimension II)

Regarding the items included in this dimension (see Table 2) the Committee observed:

> "Five of the items relate to people's beliefs about Irish as it has been part of the school system; the other (item 5) appears to refer to the extent to which the State should take an active role in promoting Irish in this area... ... it seems that a clear majority of the National sample believes that the position which Irish has had in the schools has held back children's progress and increased the failure rate in examinations, is associated with punishment and resentment, and is largely ineffective in providing pupils with the ability to use Irish in later life" (p.29).

That was the position in 1973. Ten years later, following a decade of substantial change in the educational system (including changes in Irish language policy), the attitude of the Irish public would appear to have altered substantially. Few tables included in this report reveal such a marked contrast.

TABLE 2 : ATTITUDE TO IRISH IN THE SCHOOLS (CLAR Dimension II)

Questions	1973			1983		
	Agree	No opinion	Dis-agree	Agree	No opinion	Dis-agree
1. Children doing subjects through Irish don't do as well at school as those doing them through English	60	14	26	44	15	41
2. Most children resent having to learn Irish	66	5	30	51	6	43
3. There is too much punish-ment associated with Irish in the schools	46	10	44	*	*	*
4. Many children fail their exams because of Irish	77	6	17	40	11	49
5. Promoting Irish should be the job of voluntary organisations and not the Government	46	12	42	41	9	50
6. Children seldom learn enough Irish to use it after school	77	5	18	66	7	27

The proportions holding favourable positions on these items (with the exception of item 5) have all increased by at least 10 points. Although a majority (66%) of the sample still believes that the schools are not teaching enough Irish or teaching it well enough for use in adult life, the 'clear majority' holding negative positions on Dimension II which CLAR remarked upon in 1973 no longer exists.

It should, finally, be stressed that neither in the 1973 nor the 1983 survey did this set of questions constitute the only or even the main line of enquiry into the public's attitude towards the teaching of Irish in the schools. As we will be showing elsewhere in this report, an overwhelming majority of the sample would wish to see Irish taught in both the primary and post-primary school system and a substantial minority would wish to see it more intensively taught than at present (See Table 15).

Attitudes towards the use of Irish in interpersonal interaction, and norms conditioning the use of Irish (CLAR Dimension III)

The CLAR report commenced its discussion of this set of attitudes by referring to a single question designed to establish the public's preferred language choice in ideal circumstances (i.e. Irish and English both known equally well).

TABLE 3 : BILINGUAL PREFERENCES

Question: "If everyone in Ireland could speak English and Irish equally well, which would you prefer: to speak English only, Irish only or both?"

Responses	1973 %	1983 %
English only	25	18
(English more than Irish)..	17	17
Both (English as much as Irish).	38	44
(Irish more than English)..	11	9
Irish only..	9	12

On the basis of these replies, the Committee concluded that there was widespread support for bilingualism and that social and personal constraints governing the use of Irish should be considered in that context. In 1983, that support for bilingualism would appear to have remained stable at around 70%.

In Table 4, we present the responses to these questions for 1973 and 1983. In 1973, a majority of the sample indicated a reluctance to use Irish in interpersonal interaction, "particularly in initiating conversations with people not known very well" (p.35). A majority also (Items 7 and 8) felt that the 'use of Irish is normatively defined as inappropriate' in the respondents' social circle and amongst friends. Elsewhere in their discussion the Committee observe:

'There appear to be, therefore, extremely significant social norms operating which considerably limit the "safe" or "predictable" occasions of usage of Irish to relatively homogeneous and closed social circles of intimates'. (p.38)

TABLE 4 : INTERPERSONAL OR CONVERSATIONAL USE OF IRISH (CLAR Dimension III)

	1973			1983		
	Agree	No opinion	Dis-agree	Agree	No opinion	Dis-agree
A. Norms conditioning use of Irish						
1. I will sometimes speak Irish if spoken to in Irish	44	3	53	*	*	*
2. I will always speak Irish if spoken to in Irish	34	3	63	40	-	60
3. I do not like to begin a conversation in Irish	51	4	45	69	-	31
4. I do not like to speak Irish with people who may know it better than I do	45	4	51	59	-	41
5. I wish I could use the Irish I know more often	41	2	57	43	-	57
6. I am committed to using Irish as much as I can	11	2	87	13	-	87
B. Use of Irish in Respondent's presence						
7. People in my circle don't use Irish at all	64	1	35	80	-	20
8. I don't like people speaking Irish when others are present who don't know Irish	59	2	39	72	-	28

In 1983, some changes have occurred in the responses to these questions. While relative stability is apparent in those questions relating to the respondent's general disposition to use Irish (Items 2, 5, 6) there are substantial negative changes in questions related to the personal initiation of conversations and to conversations where the use of Irish could place the respondent or other members of the company at a disadvantage (Items 3, 4, 8).

Finally, an increased majority feel that Irish would be inappropriate to their social circle and friends (Item 7). If the Committee's assessment of the 1973 situation was correct, then it would seem that the extent to which the use of Irish is considered socially appropriate has contracted in the intervening ten years.

Beliefs about the viability of Irish (CLAR Dimension IV)

Table 5 does not require much comment. The 1973 position was that "between half to three-quarters of the National sample appear to hold serious doubts in regard to the future of the language if present trends continue" (p.41). Very little change in this position is apparent in 1983, only item 8, concerning the impact of E.E.C. membership, registers any appreciable shift of opinion.

TABLE 5 : "BELIEFS ABOUT THE VIABILITY OF IRISH" (CLAR Dimension IV)

Questions	1973			1983		
	Agree	No opinion	Dis-agree	Agree	No opinion	Dis-agree
1. If nothing is done to prevent it, Irish will disappear in a generation or two	71	5	24	70	5	25
2. Gaeltacht areas are dying out	53	19	28	52	24	24
3. Most people just don't care one way or the other about Irish	79	3	18	78	3	19
4. Irish is a dead language	42	4	54	40	6	54
5. No matter what the Government does, attempts to revive Irish are bound to fail	45	8	47	48	10	42
6. If the Gaeltacht dies out, Irish will die out also.	60	7	33	64	7	29
7. Most people see all things associated with Irish as too old-fashioned	47	7	46	45	6	49
8. Being in the EEC will contribute to the loss of Irish	55	8	37	46	12	42

This is noteworihy given the sample's belief that the general use of Irish in their social interactions has contracted and (as we will show later) its general perception of declining State support for the language.

Attitude towards the Gaeltacht (CLAR Dimension V)

In 1973, CLAR concluded that the National sample was

> "highly supportive of the Gaeltacht and of Government policy which would favour its development". (p.43)

As two of these five questions were omitted in 1983, direct comparisons here are less well-founded.

TABLE 6 : ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE GAELTACHT (CLAR Dimension V)

Questions	1973			1983		
	Agree	No opinion	Dis-agree	Agree	No opinion	Dis-agree
1. The Government should provide more good jobs for people in the Gaeltacht	67	11	22	52	9	39
2. Gaeltacht people should be trained to take over responsible jobs in the Gaeltacht	85	8	8	*	*	*
3. The Government have not given Gaeltacht people enough say in developing the Gaeltacht.	48	31	22	42	31	27
4. Small schools in the Gaeltacht should not be closed down just for financial reasons	73	11	17	*	*	*
5. The Government should provide all-Irish schools wherever the public want them	70	6	23	67	5	28

However, taking the two specifically Gaeltacht questions included in Table 6 (Items 1 and 3) together with questions reported elsewhere (see Section D, Table 17) it would appear that while a majority continue to support Government policies in the Gaeltacht, there is a general weakening in this level

of support. On the extraneous item occurring on this dimension, provision of all-Irish schools, there is no significant change in the previously high level (70%) of support.

Feelings of apathy towards the Language and Language Promoting agencies and associated beliefs about the relevance of Irish for Modern Life (CLAR Dimension VI)

The range of items included in this group posed problems of interpretation for CLAR (pp. 45-48). Concluding its discussion it observes that

> "It seems most plausible to interpret this factor somewhat less negatively than it at first appears. It seems to represent feelings about the irrelevancy of the language and some of the associated 'promoting agencies' under present 'modern' conditions" (p.47).

TABLE 7 : FEELINGS OF APATHY TOWARDS THE LANGUAGE AND ASSOCIATED BELIEFS ABOUT THE RELEVANCE OF IRISH FOR MODERN LIFE (CLAR Dimension VI)

Questions	1973			1983		
	Agree	No opinion	Dis-Agree	Agree	No opinion	Dis-Agree
1. Whether people speak Irish or English does not matter to me	61	2	37	62	1	37
2. Irish is less useful than any continental language	79	3	18	78	3	19
3. Most activities run by Irish language organisations are of little interest to me ..	76	4	20	*	*	*
4. Irish should replace English as the main spoken language of Ireland..	19	2	79	*	*	*
5. What the Government does about the Irish language is not important to me..	46	2	52	38	2	60
6. Most people just don't care one way or the other about Irish.	79	3	18	78	3	19
7. The Irish language cannot be made suitable for business and science. ..	62	11	28	55	11	34
8. Irish people will have to give up their traditional way of life entirely to take part in the modern world.	29	5	66	*	*	*
9. Far less money should be spent reviving Irish no matter what effect this has on the language.. ..	46	6	48	38	10	52
10. No matter what the Government does attempts to revive Irish are bound to fail..	45	9	46	48	10	42
11. Irish is a dead language	42	4	54	40	6	54
12. Without Irish, Ireland would certainly lose its identity as a separate culture	56	6	38	66	3	31

Against this interpretation, the changes between the two surveys are of considerable interest (Table 7). On four of the nine items common to both surveys, the 1983 sample would appear to hold more favourable positions. Two of these items (5, 9) significantly relate to Government activity. A larger majority (60 to 52%) of respondents now indicate a concern about Government activities with regard to Irish and 52% would appear to hold that State expenditure in support of Irish should not be reduced if this was likely to adversely affect the language. A third item (7) shows a growing, though still minority-held, confidence that Irish can be adapted to the requirements of business and science. The other item to change (12) is not strongly associated with this dimension and, in fact, is more highly associated with Dimension I above.

SECTION B - ABILITIES IN IRISH

In both surveys three sets of questions were asked to elicit the respondents' evaluations of their own ability and that of other family members to speak and read Irish. A question on reading asked respondents to rank their ability to read Irish on a six-point scale ranging from no ability to an ability equal to or better than their reading ability in English. Secondly, respondents were asked to rank their speaking ability on a six-point scale (No Irish to Native Speaker Ability). They were also asked to similarly rank the speaking ability of their parents, spouse, eldest and youngest child. Finally, in 1983, those respondents who said they could speak more than the odd word of Irish were asked what degree of difficulty (none, some, much) they had with six speaking skills. In 1973, this last question was constructed somewhat differently and it is, therefore, only partly comparable with the 1983 version.

TABLE 8 : SPEAKING ABILITY OF RESPONDENT AND SELECTED FAMILY MEMBERS

	Respondent's Mother		Respondent		Respondent's Eldest Child	
	1973	1983	1973	1983	1973	1983
1. No Irish	50	37	21	16	12	11
2. The odd word	22	23	27	32	17	12
3. Few simple sentences	12	13	22	19	22	22
4. Parts of conversations	5	8	17	20	23	31
5. Most conversations	3	4	10	10	19	21
6. Native Speaker Ability	4	2	3	3	5	2
7. Not applicable/No information	4	13	-	-	2	1
	100	100	100	100	100	100

In Table 8 we present the responses to the question on general speaking ability for three of the six family members evaluated by respondents. Looking first at the two centre columns, i.e. ability of the respondent's themselves, it can be seen that there is little change in the distribution of the samples

across the six levels of ability. The proportion at the top two levels is unchanged, although CLAR predicted (p.319) that this component would increase by 5% by 1986 if current (1973) trends were projected; the proportion in the bottom two levels has also remained static. With regard to the ability levels of respondents' mothers, there has been an increase but further analysis will be necessary to take account of the higher 'no information/not applicable' percentage in 1983. Likewise, an improvement is noticeable in the ability levels of respondents' children, but only at middle levels. Thus, the position remains much as it was in 1973, with about one-third of the respondents professing the ability to handle at least 'parts of conversations' in Irish.

The second set of questions on ability in Irish concerned specific areas of difficulty. As already noted, only three items are common to both surveys.

TABLE 9 : DIFFICULTIES IN SPEAKING IRISH

Question: In Irish, would you say that you have difficulty with:	1973			1983		
	None	Some	Much	None	Some	Much
a. Pronunciation	37	38	25	39	45	16
b. Making yourself understood	29	39	32	28	44	28
c. Using correct grammar	20	36	44	16	40	44

Note:- These figures refer only to those (c. 50% of each sample) who placed their general speaking ability on one of the top four levels of the scale (see Table 8 above).

While there would seem to be some evidence of improvement on the first of these items, the position with regard to the other two appears to be unchanged.

Finally, the question on reading ability (Table 10) shows that only in the case of the proportion unable to read any Irish was there a significant improvement. Even if the top two levels are combined, the difference is only of the order of 3%.

TABLE 10 : READING ABILITY IN IRISH

Ability to Read in Irish	1973	1983
1. Cannot read any Irish..	27	20
2. Can recognise a few words only..	27	28
3. Can read with much help	12	14
4. Can read with some help	15	16
5. Can read with no help..	13	15
6. Can read as well as or better than English.. ..	6	7
	100	100

SECTION C - USE OF IRISH

Of the many questions on this topic common to both surveys, the most general are briefly summarised in Table 11.

TABLE 11 : GENERAL QUESTIONS ABOUT RESPONDENTS' USE OF IRISH

	1973 %	1983 %
1. Since leaving school, have you used Irish in conversation? (Often/Several Times)..	16	18
2. Since leaving school, have you done any writing in Irish? (Often/Several Times)	5	5
3. Can you recall if you participated in a conversation in the past week in which you used Irish? (Yes)..	*	9
4. At present, how often does anyone in your home/ residence speak any Irish?		
a. Often/Always	3	5
b. Occasionally/Seldom..	20	25
5. At present, do you speak Irish while at work?		
a. Often/Sometimes	7	*
b. At least weekly/Less than weekly.	*	6
6. Do you watch programmes in Irish on T.V.?		
a. Often/Sometimes	51	*
b. Daily/A few times a week/less often.	*	72

Overall, these comparisons do not reveal any significant change from the generally low rates of active use of Irish. The only instance of positive change is the increase in the viewership rates for Irish language television programmes. There were no significant changes in the use of Irish in the home, in general conversation or in the use of Irish at work. Of rather more interest is question 3 above (for 1983 only) which asked if the respondent had used Irish in conversation during the previous week. Nine per cent of the sample replied affirmatively to this question and it is noticeable that this figure is higher than those using Irish intensively at home or at work. The three ratios combined would suggest that between 5% and 10% of the sample consider themselves to be currently active users of Irish in the home, at work or

in conversation although not necessarily using Irish all or most of the time.

The ratios for the use of Irish at work are based on the total sample. As about 45% of the sample are not in the work-force, the percentage of those actually working who use Irish at work is closer to 12%. (This upward adjustment is similarly appropriate with the 1973 survey). In addition, it might be noted that 16% of those working in 1983 said that a knowledge of Irish was a necessary qualification for their job and 12% said that they were currently working in a job in which the public would expect employees to have a knowledge of Irish. These last two questions were not asked in 1973.

The Media

Although the format of the question on Irish language television programmes reported in Table 11 (Item 6) differed between 1973 and 1983, the figures quoted are directly comparable. Both surveys permitted a response of 'Never' watching Irish language programmes on television and these percentages are 49% and 24% for 1973 and 1983 respectively. This increase is primarily due to an improvement in the ratio for occasional rather than for relatively frequent viewing of Irish programmes. This may be related, of course, to the availability and nature of such programmes. Nevertheless, 20% of the 1983 sample reported themselves as watching such programmes at least 'a few times a week'. Of programmes broadcast in the past year, the ones attracting regular viewers (i.e. 'nearly every week') were Trom agus Eadrom (26%), SBB (17%) and An Nuacht (14%). Also a majority of the sample (52%) would in 1983 be 'sorry' or 'very sorry' if no Irish programmes were available. This compares with 46% in 1973. As we will show shortly, it would, in addition, be fair to assume from replies to other questions that a significant minority would wish to see more Irish language programmes available.

Over the same period, the proportions listening to Irish programmes on the radio would appear to have declined. In 1973, 67% never listened to Irish programmes: this proportion had risen to 77% in 1983. Although Radio na Gaeltachta is available on the national VHF network, 85% of the sample in 1983 never listen to this station.

Likewise, while the proportion who used Irish for writing since leaving school has remained unchanged (about 5%), the levels of reading Irish materials (books or magazines) would appear to have declined. In the present home of the respondent 82% said material in Irish was never read compared to 73% in 1973.

Irish in the Schools.

The only aspect of interest here is the amount of Irish used in the school programmes experienced by the respondent. In effect, how many subjects, other than Irish, was he/she taught through Irish. The decrease since the late forties of bilingual-type programmes in both primary and post-primary schools has been well documented elsewhere, and we would therefore expect these changes to reflect themselves in our sample. When asked about the amount of Irish taught in their primary school, 13% (compared to 17% in 1973) answered that they had received all or part of their education through Irish. In post-primary schools the figures are 10% (1983) compared to 20% (1973). As these figures relate to the entire adult sample, changes over a ten-year period are, of course, not fully reflected. Such information as we have to hand suggests that the under-30 group have received very little bilingual education (i.e. 6% in primary school; 4% in post-primary school).

Changes over time

In later analysis, the responses from different age-groups will be examined more fully. Here we can mention two questions included only in the 1983 survey. All respondents were asked

if more or less Irish was being used in their home today compared to five years ago. Twelve per cent said more, 10% less. The main reason for both increases and decreases was related to the presence of school-going children. A similar question was asked about the use of Irish at work. Of those presently at work, 3% reported an increase; 2% a decrease. However, in this case, the questions was asked only of those who previously reported at least minimal use of Irish at work currently. The decline ratio is, therefore, possible understated.

Use of Irish in Respondents' Networks

Finally, we may note the responses to three questions addressed, not to the respondent's own use of Irish, but to the use of Irish among friends, relatives and close acquaintances.

TABLE 12 : USE OF IRISH IN RESPONDENTS' SOCIAL NETWORKS

Question (% answering 'Yes')	1973	1983
A. (1973) Do you know anyone who is bringing up children through Irish at home?	28	*
(1983) Do you have any friends or relatives who are bringing up their children through Irish at home or who use a lot of Irish with their children?..	*	23
B. (1973) Do you know anyone who speaks any Irish at all?	63	*
(1983) Do you have any friends or relatives who speak any Irish at all outside their home?	*	29
C. People in my circle (use) Irish	36	20

The first two questions were altered in 1983 to confine replies to the respondents' family and friendship networks. Thus, strictly speaking, the replies cannot be compared. Nonetheless, seen against question C, which was common to both surveys, it appears reasonable to conclude that smaller percentages of the 1983 sample perceive Irish as an element of their social interactions.

SECTION D - ATTITUDES TOWARDS IRISH LANGUAGE POLICIES

Nearly forty questions were included in the 1983 survey to measure the public's perception of Government policies and its support for policies in specific areas.

We have already commented on a question designed to establish the public's language preference in the ideal situation where everyone knew both languages equally well. (Section A, Table 3). While the responses in both surveys indicate majority support for a bilingual situation, it could be argued, as CLAR admitted, that this question was biased towards a bilingual preference.

Both surveys, however, included a further less idealistic question, the responses to which clearly indicate an increased level of support for an active Irish language policy.

TABLE 13 : ATTITUDE TO LANGUAGE POLICY IF GAELTACHT DISAPPEARS

Question: "If there was a big drop in the number of Irish speakers in the Gaeltacht, would you say that promoting Irish for the rest of the country would be:	1973 %		1983 %	
1. More important than ever	31	54	43	67
2. As important as ever	23		24	
3. Less important	19		19	
4. No longer important	16		10	
5. Not, and was never, important	11		4	
	100		100	

Two other general questions could be taken to indicate a somewhat more critical view of Government support for Irish in 1983 compared to 1973. The questions asked the respondent whether (a) the Government was following the right or wrong policies and (b) whether the Government was doing too much, enough or too little for Irish. The following points may be noted:

(a) Twenty-five per cent of the 1983 sample believe the Government is following the 'wrong' policies compared to 9% in 1973.

(b) Thirty-three per cent of the 1983 sample believe the Government is doing 'too little' for Irish compared to 17% in 1973.

(c) Both in 1973 and 1983, 45 - 50% of the sample replied 'don't know' to the question about the 'rightness' or 'wrongness' of Government policies.

(d) However, on the question about the level of state activity the 1983 sample were less inclined to reply 'don't know' (27% to 39%) and as noted above more inclined to view the Government as doing 'too little'.

(e) Overall, only 25 - 30% of the sample in 1983 would appear satisfied that the Government is following the right policies and doing enough for Irish.

On another question about the position of Irish in the programmes of the main political parties, 42% in 1983 said they did not know which party had the 'best' policy on Irish compared to 34% in 1973.

Before considering specific areas, attention may be drawn to a question included in the 1983 (but not the 1973) survey on priorities.

TABLE 14 : PRIORITIES FOR IRISH LANGUAGE POLICY

"The following is a list of areas in which, over the years, Governments have tried to improve the position of Irish. If more Government money and effort were now to be spent on improving the position of Irish, which one of these areas should get the greatest attention?"	(%)
1. Public services in Irish for Irish-speakers (e.g. forms, documents, Irish-speaking officials	2
2. Irish well taught to all children	63
3. Maintenance of Irish in the Gaeltacht	8
4. Television/Radio programmes in Irish	9
5. More books, magazines, newspapers etc. in Irish	5
6. All of these	7
7. None	2
8. Don't know	4
	100

It should be emphasised that this question relates to new efforts and it is not, therefore, addressed to general strategic priorities. For example, if it was felt that an area was already getting adequate assistance, respondents would look elsewhere for areas to develop. This would not necessarily imply a low evaluation of its importance. Nevertheless, the importance attached to the efficient teaching of Irish is overwhelming.

Education

As has already been shown (Section A, Table 2) the 1983 sample revealed a substantially more favourable attitude towards the teaching of Irish in the school system. This shift is maintained in other questions common to both surveys. For example, 69% of parents in 1983 said that it was very important or somewhat important to them that their children grew up knowing Irish. This compares with 60% in 1973. Similarly, while 33% in 1973 would be 'glad' or indifferent if school children stopped learning Irish, this proportion had fallen to 24% in 1983. Those holding favourable positions increased accordingly.

Other questions were included only in 1983. The most general of these asked respondents to indicate how much Irish they considered suitable in the educational programmes of most children to-day.

TABLE 15 : SCHOOL PROGRAMME PREFERRED FOR MOST CHILDREN

Amount of Irish in Programme	Primary %	Post-Primary %
1. All English (with no Irish taught)	3	4
2. Irish taught as a subject only	72	72
3. All-Irish (with English as a subject only)	4	4
4. Bilingual with (i) more subjects through English than through Irish	4	4
(ii) about 50/50	16	15
(iii) more subjects through Irish than through English	1	1
	100	100

While an overwhelming majority would consider that Irish should be taught simply as one subject to most children, the table is of interest in two other respects. First, the proportion who would wish Irish to be dropped from the school programme is tiny (less than 5%). Secondly, the minority (25%) who would like some form of bilingual programme is still substantially larger than the proportion of children currently receiving such education. As noted above (Section C), this would appear to be around 5%.(See p.21)

We further asked all respondents would they send (or would they have sent) their children to an all-Irish school if one were available in their locality. Twenty-four per cent said yes in the case of primary schooling and 19% in the case of post-primary. It should be noted that this question was phrased in terms of all-Irish schooling, while only 4% in the previous question advocated all-Irish education for most children and the largest sub-group of those desiring bilingual education was for a 50/50 arrangement.

A further question was asked to establish which aspect of Irish (spoken or written) should be emphasised for most children. Sixty per cent felt that both aspects should receive equal emphasis in primary schools and 71% were of this view for post-primary schools. Rather more (35%) would like spoken Irish emphasised in primary schools than in post-primary schools (22%).

Finally, it was pointed out to respondents that

> "At present, unless a student was educated outside the Republic, a pass qualification in Irish (Leaving Certificate standard) is necessary for entry to most of our Universities and to certain other third-level institutions".

They were then asked if Irish should be a necessary qualification for entry to various types of third-level education.

TABLE 16 : SUPPORT FOR IRISH ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS FOR 3rd-LEVEL EDUCATION

Question: Do you think that this (Irish language qualification) should be required for entry to:-	Yes	No	Don't know
(a) All Universities	35	60	5
(b) All National Institutes of Higher Education	34	60	6
(c) All Colleges of Technology and R.T.O.'s	29	64	7
(d) All Teacher Training Colleges	68	27	5
(e) All other Colleges	32	60	8

Only about one third of respondents were in favour of this type of policy generally, but over two thirds (68%) felt that Irish should be an essential entry requirement for Teacher Training Colleges. Furthermore, 63% feel that the Government should guarantee facilities for those who wish to pursue third-level courses through Irish.

Other policy areas

In reply to a general question, respondents were asked if they agreed that the Government was supporting the use of Irish in selected areas and if they agreed that any Government should support these policies. The responses for 1973 and 1983 are set out in Table 17. Two points should be noted. First, the 1973 questionnaire did not ask about the operation of current policies except in four instances. Second, the 1973 survey, held within a few months of a change of Government, asked about the policies of the previous Government. In 1983, the question was asked about the present Government. We feel that this difference does not invalidate direct comparisons.

TABLE 17 : PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS IN 1973 AND 1983 IN TERMS OF THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF SELECTED POLICIES AND THEIR PERCEPTIONS AS TO THE DESIRABILITY OF SUCH POLICIES

Question: In general, does (did) the present (previous) Government (a) encourage or support the following and (b) should any Government?	1973		1983	
	Has it been done	Should it be done?	Is it being done?	Should it be done?
	% Agree it has	% Agree it should	% Agree it is	% Agree it should
A. Media				
1. Use of Irish on TV..	81	66	56	76
B. Public Administration				
2. A Bill of Rights for Irish speakers	(a)	(a)	10*	36*
3. Use of Irish in Civil Service ..	(a)	(a)	59	75
4. Use of Irish in Dail	(a)	43	26*	66
5. Use of written Irish in public..	81	56	63	70
6. Irish exams & qualifications for civil servants, Gardai etc. . ..	(a)	34	76	71
7. One standard dialect of Irish ..	26*	53	14*	55
C. Gaeltacht				
8. Improvement of industry and farming for Irish speakers in the Gaeltacht	(a)	63	34*	56
9. Grants to improve housing and living conditions for Irish speakers in Gaeltacht areas . ..	(a)	63	41*	52
D. Language Movement				
10. Irish language organisations. ..	62	64	39*	71
11. Grants for families who bring up their children through Irish ..	(a)	31	25*	40
12. Scholarships for those going to Irish Summer Colleges	(a)	(a)	49*	69

* The percentage replying "Don't know" was above 25% in all of these ten questions and above 40% in the case of four.

(a) Either this question was not asked in 1973, or its form was different.

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Media

In reply to a separate question about the future role of Irish on television, 53% had stated in 1973 that they would not care or would be glad if Irish was not spoken. In 1983, this proportion had declined to 40%. The responses to Item 1 on Table 17, give further evidence of this shift in opinion. Seventy-six percent of the sample now feel that the Government should support its use on TV, compared to 66% ten years earlier. Furthermore, only 56% feel that the Government is now supporting Irish, compared to 81% in 1973. Finally, with regard to the 1983 survey, it should be noted that there is a difference of 20% between those who feel that the Government is supporting Irish on television and the proportion who feel that it should.

In another question, not included in Table 17, we asked respondents about their support for an all-Irish local radio service. In the context of present plans to develop local radio services they were asked if they would be regular listeners to an all-Irish station (if one were provided). Only 10% said 'yes' and only 7% felt that there was sufficient demand for such a service.

Public Administration

We have already shown (Section A - Table 1) that the 1983 survey revealed a significant increase in the proportions of the sample agreeing with statements that public leaders should use Irish more and that civil servants should be able to speak Irish (See items 7, 11, Table 1). Here in Table 17, this pattern is again apparent. On all items common to both surveys there is increased agreement with the desirability of promoting the use of Irish in public affairs. Some of these increases are substantial - in the region of 15 - 20%. There is also, as in the case of media policy, a noticeable discrepancy between what the sample feel is being supported and what it feels should be supported. In addition, on the two items where the question was asked in 1973 (items 5, 7) there is a decrease in agreement

with the statement that the Government is supporting policy in these areas. Finally, it might be noted that in 1983, on four of the six items in this group, more than 20% said that they didn't know if the Government was, in fact, supportive of such policies. Nearly 60% did not know if the Government support a Bill of Rights for Irish-speakers.

Gaeltacht

As already remarked, the questions regarding Gaeltacht policy are unusual in that they reveal a small decline in support, although the proportions agreeing with the desirability of such policies is still over 50% in 1983. However, this decline has not resulted in increased opposition to these policies, but in an increase of the proportion reporting "Don't know". Also, just 40% in the case of each question said they didn't know if the Government was supporting these policies.

Language Movement

Lastly, in a group of questions relating to support for voluntary language groups and activities, a pattern similar to that observed in the first two groups emerges. Those agreeing that the Government should support such policies are substantially in excess of the proportions agreeing that the Government is actually supportive. Again, the "don't knows" account for over 30% of the replies to the first part of the question.

SECTION E - SUMMARY

THE POSITION IN 1973

We may preface a summary of the findings of the 1983 survey by briefly quoting some extracts from CLAR's own summary of its 1973 survey.

(i) On general attitudes: 'For the national sample (1973) support for the language and language policies is very high when 'Irish' is expressed in terms of ethnic identity, cultural value and in terms of the Gaeltacht. Support is rather negative on the dimension of 'school Irish' and commitment to its use is low, while beliefs about the eventual fate of the language, and its position and utility in the modern world, are generally pessimistic'. (p.298).

(ii) On ability: 'It seems that one can generally say that only 21% of the population have no competence at all in spoken Irish.... The other 79% vary considerably from minimal to high competence.... It appears likely that a figure around 30% represents that proportion of the population ... who have at least moderate conversational competence in the spoken language. Less than a third of these, however, have sufficient native grasp of spoken Irish for most conversational purposes, although the remainder have relatively high passive (listening/understanding) competence (p.310).

(iii) On use of Irish: 'The current usage of Irish amongst adults in interaction in the home or at work or amongst friends is very low.... About 15% of the adult population use Irish at work, at home and with friends (at least occasionally) and only about 4% of the population appear to use it very frequently and intensively' (p.305). Passive use, i.e. watching or listening to Irish programmes on radio or television was higher. 'While less than 4% of households have

anyone using Irish 'always' or 'often' at home, 11 - 14% of households are frequent listeners or viewers and a further one-third are occasionally participants' (p.344).

(iv) On attitudes to language policy: 'The majority of people support a general bilingual objective and will back up specific policies directed towards that end. Thus, despite some negative elements in the attitudinal pattern, the evidence is clear that the great majority of the public support a policy of increasing the bilingual competence of the population. At the moment they do not support the extensive use of Irish in the public sphere.... There is a clear majority support for the continued teaching of Irish to all pupils in the schools' (p.304).

THE POSITION IN 1983

While there are marked similarities in the patterns revealed by the 1973 and the 1983 surveys, there are also significant differences. The similarities are particularly noticeable in the cases of language use and ability. Very few differences are apparent between the 1973 and 1983 samples on matters pertaining to the use of Irish in the home, at work and in social life. Irish continues to be used, on a regular and frequent basis by less than 10% of the population. Only in the case of passive use, i.e. watching Irish language programmes on television, was there a significant increase. As regards the overall levels of ability to speak Irish, there has been very little change in the proportion with moderate to high competence in Irish. This would still appear to be around 30%.

It is in the attitudinal pattern that the main changes have occurred, but even here there is also a considerable degree of agreement between the two surveys. Support for Irish, when it is expressed in 'terms of ethnic identity, cultural value and the Gaeltacht' continues to be very high. Beliefs in the viability and utility of Irish continue to be generally pessimistic. Outside of these areas, however, there are some

noteworthy differences. They may be noted as follows:

(a) Attitudes towards Irish in the schools would appear to have improved substantially.

(b) The social norms inhibiting the use of Irish, which were already strong in 1973, would seem to have become more pronounced in 1983.

(c) General attitudes towards the use of Irish in public life would appear to have changed in a favourable direction.

(d) On most of the general attitudinal questions there is a drift away from strongly held views. Respondents in 1983 were more likely to 'mildly' agree or disagree with the statements on which their opinion was sought.

(e) The 1983 sample is more inclined to perceive the Government to be inactive with regard to Irish language policy and/or to be following the wrong policy. When questioned about specific policies, higher proportions of the 1983 sample were in favour of language policies but lower proportions perceived the Government to be currently supporting such policies. Also, there was a general increase in the proportions unable to say if the Government was, in fact, pursuing specific policies.

(f) While a majority of the sample in 1983 were still supportive of special Gaeltacht policies, this support would appear to be weakening somewhat.

Finally, some questions were included in the 1983 survey which did not feature in 1973. Of these, the majority referred to in this report relate to educational policies. About 70% of the sample would wish the Government to concentrate on the teaching of Irish to all children in any new programme of action. While only 5% would wish to see Irish dropped from the school programme, about 70% feel that teaching Irish as just one subject among

others is the most appropriate for most children. Only about 25% of the sample are in favour of some form of bilingual programme. (However, this minority is still substantially in excess of the current level of bilingual schooling). Generally, a majority were not in favour of Irish being a necessary qualification for entry to third-level education, except in the case of Teacher Training Colleges.

Later reports will contain a fuller analysis of these findings together with an analysis of other items not reported here. These additional items primarily relate to the role of Irish in respondents' schooling and supplementary questions on their use of Irish at present.